



Diversity Task Group Minutes

Date: February 11, 2019
Time: 6:45pm – Social Time; 7:00-9:00pm - Meeting
Location: Jefferson Cutter House

DTG Meeting 02/11/2019

6:45 pm — social time; 7:00-9:00 pm meeting

Jefferson Cutter House

Attendees: Michaiah Healy, Katell Guellec, Miriam Stein, Kelly Lynema, Sophie Spink, Mary Harrison, Rajeev Soneja, Jordana Saintil, Jane Lynch, Farjam Mohtadi, Judith Schaechter

1. Introductions and ice breaker
2. Minutes approved from last meeting
3. **Spring Civic Engagement:** We want to continue the conversation happening in Arlington. Our budget is \$500 from the town to promote awareness, education, and action. We can ask for more.
 - a. True Story Theater, Human Rights Commission want to work with us; recent Courageous Conversations event at Thompson was large; there is lots of energy out there, and we need to harness these partnerships.
 - b. Encouraging the town to create and hire a Diversity Coordinator might be one way to support efforts.
4. **Overnight parking ban:** A select board hearing is happening this evening, and DTG members are there to support a warrant article for a culturally sensitive approach to overnight parking exemptions. Kelly noted that there has been support in the town survey for questioning the need for the ban. She thinks it dates back to the Red Line expansion, although it may be earlier. No one working in town seems to know the true reasons for it.
5. **Arlington Reads Book Discussion:** This project was started by DTG in collaboration with the library. Michaiah has started "Refugee" and highly recommends it. We might read and discuss for the next meeting in March. Also, the library will have events in March around the book, and DTG cooperates on these as well.

Schools

- c. **DIG updates:** Miriam gave the background of how the DIGs were formed. Rajeev and Katell gave some general updates about work happening at various elementary and middle schools. Miriam encouraged parents to get involved with hiring committees. There is concern that the qualification test for new teachers may include cultural bias (MTEL). In addition, the district's human resources web site is not welcoming to diverse candidates.
- d. **Courageous Conversations event at Thompson:** Judith gave a summary of this event,

which was attended by ~160-180 parents. The facilitator was Dr Liza Talusan. Responses were that it was a small step and also that they were grateful to have the opportunity. One idea has been to create a Courageous Conversation curriculum that parents can use with their families, so that it's a progressive series, bringing her every few months.

- e. **HS Suspension School Committee meeting:** Judith discussed what happened in response to Principal Janger's slides on suspension rates and race of students. The slides were misleading and didn't show that Black students were being suspended at a much higher rate than their White peers. DIG members gave him feedback, and he came to the meeting with correct data. However, he then gave the wrong facts about how Arlington's rates compare to other towns — our town has higher rates than surrounding towns, but he said the opposite. It is unclear how follow up will occur.
- f. **HS Restorative Justice:** Sophie and Jordana summarized that this year there has been no reference back to the hate graffiti incident of last year, so that current students have been left hanging. No update was given about the restorative justice that happened with the perpetrators. So, recently a meeting was held with HS students and DTG members to process feelings and the lack of closure, as well as brainstorm where to go next. Ideas are to focus on this at annual Inclusion Day in April with an invited speaker; the BSU wants to bring a speaker on structural racism. Another idea is to bring restorative justice experts into the weekly advisory meetings to help students understand it and how perpetrators were held accountable. Students are drafting a letter to the administration, with an accompanying letter from the DTG and Rainbow Commission.
- g. Farjam talked about her daughter's **experience at Ottoson**, with her and others being called terrorists. They have created a student group called "Release Peace." It is not intended only for students of color, but rather to bring all students together to discuss inclusion, to challenge assumptions held about each other. They have decided that all their identities can come together in acts of service and have worked together on a couple of projects. Also, a film is being made that shows diversity in the Arlington school system, initiated by Ms. Bell, a teacher at Bishop.
- h. Jordana talked about the interest of the BSU to work with the DTG. She is the founder and got it off the ground this year. There is an interest in partnering on projects together. Currently, they meet weekly and have about 15 members.
- i. Rajeev discussed having Todd Morse as a guest speaker due to his success at hiring and retaining diverse students. He also met recently with Todd. The sense was that Todd has more flexibility with who he can hire, he uses Indeed and School Spring, looks for a B.A., and doesn't require school experience. Basic requirement is eager to work with kids.